

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards

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The Conference Awards Grant for Avian Influenza Project

Fayetteville, Ark – Dr. Robyn Gershon has been awarded a grant in the amount of \$10,000 by the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards, Inc. for the development of her project entitled “Avian Influenza Preparedness in the Death Care Profession.”

The project targets emergency preparedness for pandemic influenza and is intended for the promotion of death care education. The project is designed to build upon The Conference’s continuing pursuit of academic excellence and achievement.

Data obtained from the study will assist in the development of a web-based educational program that will be accessible to licensed graduates of American Board of Funeral Service Education accredited schools. The web-based program will be designed as a high quality simulation exercise that will use a case study approach.

The program will be enhanced with data gathered from the needs assessment survey, which will be collected from a sample of licensed graduates from the nine districts throughout the country.

The five overall goals of the project are:

1. To conduct a needs assessment of death care professionals with respect to avian influenza pandemic-related educational needs.
2. To assess, in addition to preparedness-related knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and behavioral intentions (e.g. vaccination against pandemic influenza strains), the barriers of preparedness.
3. The development, with input from The Conference, learning objectives, and training curriculum, both of which will be used to guide the development of a state-of-the art, web based simulation training program.
4. To provide three continuing education units (CEU) for successful completion of the program to all licensed graduates of Conference-approved schools (ABFSE accredited), in the nine districts throughout the country, through The Conference website.
5. To assess the effectiveness of the educational program.

Full implementation of the plan will be completed in two years.

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Dr. Robyn Gershon is a leading occupational health and safety researcher with nearly 20 years of experience in conducting occupational research studies. She is currently a Professor in the Department of Sociomedical Sciences at the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University in New York with a joint appointment in the School of Nursing.

Gershon is also a co-investigator and member of the Columbia University Center for Public Health and Preparedness, as well as a senior faculty member with the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University.

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